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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000453

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DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#) [CD](#)

SUBJECT: REARRANGING DECK CHAIRS ON THE TITANIC: JMST
REORGANIZATION

REF: A. KHARTOUM 192

[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 112

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Poloffs met March 25 with the UN Joint Mediation Support Team's (JMST) newly-appointed Chief of Staff Yasir Sabra to discuss the stalled Darfur peace process and JMST plans to restructure its operations and pursue modest "confidence building measures" with the parties in advance of a more robust process under a new Chief Mediator. Sabra arrived in early March on a six-month mission to guide the JMST through the reorganization phase, and has been involved with other mediation processes including the Congo (DRC).

[1](#)2. (C) Although not close to announcing the new chief mediator, Sabra said the UN and AU are considering well-respected former Arab League envoy, the Algerian Mohammed Sahnoun. According to Sabra, a senior mediator empowered to negotiate with both sides is necessary not only because rebels have been requesting someone of that level, but also because the JMST is currently encountering operational limitations from the Government of Sudan (GoS). Since Sahnoun is relatively high profile, he apparently has insisted that he replace the UN and AU Special Envoys rather than report to them. He is willing to live full-time in Khartoum (not in El Fasher) which Sabra said would require that a capable deputy mediator also be identified, "someone who is empowered to negotiate with rebels on the mediator's behalf." Sabra said current envoys Eliasson and Salim may be willing to step down, since they recognize that a full-time mediation team is required, and that these details are being negotiated now.

[1](#)3. (C) While these decisions are being worked out between the UN and AU, Sabra is focused on trimming back the size of the JMST office. Having already cut its administrative staff (and now relying on UNAMID for administrative support), the JMST will further reduce its footprint to achieve "greater mobility." Sabra envisions that the JMST will split into teams of three or four political officers (two senior and two junior officers on each team) with one team assigned to deal with the rebel movements, another to deal with civil society, and a final team to deal with the GoS. One officer will be tasked to handle public outreach and information.

[1](#)4. (C) Before the next phase of the mediation process begins in earnest under the "right conditions" including greater security as well as a new mediator, the JMST plans to organize informal confidence-building workshops and/or meetings between the GoS and the rebels. So as not to raise expectations, Sabra said the meetings will be kept a secret

and would not be tied to specific goals. Rather, the meetings would focus on building confidence and helping the parties develop proposals key issues such as security and humanitarian access. Sabra noted that such meetings, held in absolute secrecy, had been effective in bringing the Congolese parties together. Sabra said the JMST would brief the donor community on these initiatives at the right time.

15. (C) In addition to holding preparatory workshops, the JMST plans to engage civil society more actively, though will leave most of the coordination and organization of activities with civil society to UNQMD civil Affairs. (8CommEn4: QlhsQM
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